National Union of Women Teachers

39 GORDON SQUARE, W.C.1

Telephone: Museum 2768

July, 1926

To the Chairman and Members of Local Education Committees.

Sirs (Mesdames),

The question of the Headships of Mixed Schools has been considered by the Central Council of the National Union of Women Teachers and the Annual Conference passed the following resolution :—

> "This Conference, desiring equality of opportunity for girls with boys and for women with men, is of the opinion that the Headships of all Mixed Schools—Primary, Central and Secondary—should be open to women equally with men."

The reasons which led the National Union of Women Teachers to the above conclusions are appended.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

ETHEL E. FROUD,

General Secretary.

HEADSHIPS OF MIXED SCHOOLS.

The N.U.W.T. desires to call the attention of Local Education Authorities to the practice which is growing up in some areas, when an appointment to the Headship of a Mixed School is being made, of considering the claims of men only for such a post.

In some districts, the vacancy is advertised as for a head teacher, but men only are called up, and this although the women applicants are equally qualified for the post both academically and in respect of their service as teachers; indeed, in a recent case of an appointment in a large County Borough, one of the women applicants was superior in professional qualifications to all the men; yet neither she nor any other woman obtained a place on the short list.

The N.U.W.T. gladly acknowledges that some Authorities do consider the applicant as teachers, and not merely as men or women; e.g., Middlesex, after having had experience of two or three women as heads of Mixed Schools, has just appointed another woman to a similar position.

From the point of view of the efficiency of the schools, the N.U.W.T. submits that it is uneducational to exclude all women from the headships under consideration. Since there are roughly nearly twice as many certificated women as men in the schools, the field of selection is limited when two-thirds of all the persons eligible are automatically excluded.

Women teachers are, on the average, at least as well qualified as men teachers on the average. Indeed, some independent judges have held that women are, on the whole, better qualified than men, since men have such a much wider choice of occupations open to them than women. We submit, therefore, that it does not make for efficiency to exclude all women from posts where their gifts as teachers should have the widest influence.

From the point of the welfare of the girl pupils in Mixed Schools, it is unwise that they should always be deprived of the influence of a head mistress. As applied to Mixed Schools, the cry of "Men Teachers for Boys" is one-sided as it also involves "Men Teachers for Girls." To appoint a senior mistress under a master does not meet the case, such a mistress not having the authority which attaches to the head of a school. In the arrangement of the curriculum, too, it often happens that the girls' interests are subordinated to those of the boys, not consciously, but because the headmaster does not realise the needs of the girls.

In certain districts, where most upper schools are mixed, and under headmasters, many of the women assistants are necessarily in a position of subordination to headmasters who, by reason of lack of experience, and also in some cases through lower academic qualifications and a weaker personality, are less qualified than themselves to hold a headship. This *must* sometimes happen when all women are shut out. The moral effect on such women is most disastrous. However wrapped up in their work they may be, they cannot fail to be discouraged and disheartened by the knowledge that they can never hope for the natural reward of excellence in service—the attainment of a headship.

Those Authorities who have made the experiment of appointing a woman to the headship of a Mixed School when she is the best candidate—and this is all that is asked by the N.U.W.T.—will testify that the experiment has been a success.

The Union therefore respectfully requests that your Authority will, on the three grounds of educational efficiency, fairness to girl pupils, and fairness to women teachers, make its appointments to headships of all Mixed Schools on the basis of educational qualifications, irrespective of whether the candidate is a man or a woman.